

# education policy analysis archives

A peer-reviewed, independent,  
open access, multilingual journal



Arizona State University

Volume 28 Number 24

February 10, 2020

ISSN 1068-2341

## A Review of State Policies on Principal Professional Development

*Keith Davis*

*Deborah Rogers*

*&*

*Martin Harrigan*

Saint Louis University

United States

**Citation:** Davis, K., Rogers, D., & Harrigan, M. (2020). A review of state policies on principal professional development. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 28(24).

<https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.28.4421>

**Abstract:** Although principal professional development (PPD) has been proven to improve school performance at various levels, professional development (PD) for teachers receives more time, resources, and attention at both district and state level. When PPD is provided it often does not meet research-based recommendations. The literature was reviewed and five criteria areas with multiple indicators for effective PPD outlined; these were subsequently revised and validated by experts in the field. The PPD certification policies of each U.S. state that made this information publicly accessible was examined through Department of Education websites, with clarification by phone when necessary. This study revealed that only one state met all indicators, and that most states did not have comprehensive, research-based PPD policies. Given the significant effect school leadership has on student achievement and school improvement, further research on PPD implementation should be prioritized.

**Keywords:** principal; school administrator; professional development; policy analysis

Journal website: <http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/>

Facebook: /EPAAA

Twitter: @epaa\_aape

Manuscript received: 6/28/2019

Revisions received: 8/7/2019

Accepted: 8/19/2019

**Una revisión de las políticas estatales en el desarrollo profesional del director**

**Resumen:** Aunque el desarrollo profesional del director (PPD por sus siglas en inglés) se ha demostrado para mejorar el desempeño escolar en varios niveles, el desarrollo profesional (PD por sus siglas en inglés) para profesores recibe más tiempo, recursos y atención tanto a nivel distrital como estatal. Cuando se proporciona el PPD, con frecuencia no cumple las recomendaciones basadas en investigaciones. Se revisó la literatura y se perfilaron cinco áreas de criterio con múltiples indicadores para un PPD efectivo; posteriormente, expertos en la materia las repasaron y validaron. Las políticas de certificación del PPD de cada estado de los EE.UU., que hicieron que esta información estuviera abierta al público, se examinaron a través de los sitios web del Departamento de Educación, con aclaraciones por teléfono cuando fuese necesario. Este estudio reveló que solo un estado cumplió con todos los indicadores, y que la mayoría de los estados no tenían políticas de PPD integrales y basadas en investigaciones. Dado el efecto significativo que tiene el liderazgo escolar sobre el rendimiento del alumno y la mejora de la escuela, debe darse prioridad a investigaciones nuevas sobre la implementación del PPD.

**Palabras-clave:** director; administrador escolar; desarrollo profesional; análisis de políticas

**Uma análise das políticas estaduais sobre o desenvolvimento profissional do diretor escolar**

**Resumo:** Apesar de o desenvolvimento profissional do diretor escolar (DPD) ter provado melhorar o desempenho escolar em vários níveis, o desenvolvimento profissional (DP) para professores recebe mais tempo, recursos e atenção nos níveis municipal e estadual. Quando o DPD é oferecido, ele geralmente não atende a recomendações baseadas em pesquisa. A literatura foi revisada, e cinco áreas que servem de critério com vários indicadores para o DPD eficaz foram estabelecidas; estas foram subsequentemente alteradas e validadas por especialistas no ramo. As políticas de certificação do DPD de cada estado americano que tornaram essas informações publicamente acessíveis foram examinadas através dos sites do Departamento de Educação, com esclarecimentos prestados por telefone quando necessário. Este estudo revelou que somente um estado atendeu a todos os indicadores, e que a maioria dos estados não têm políticas de DPD abrangentes e baseadas em pesquisa. Dado o efeito significativo que a liderança escolar tem nas conquistas dos alunos e na melhoria das escolas, uma pesquisa mais aprofundada sobre a implementação do DPD deveria ser priorizada.

**Palavras-chave:** diretor; administrador escolar; desenvolvimento profissional; análise de políticas

## Introduction

Research indicates principal professional development (PPD) is a fundamental element in school improvement (Ayers et al., 2012; Evans & Mohr, 1999; Gümüş, 2019; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). The practices of PPD are similar to and as important to the overall academic and socio-emotional growth of a school as teacher PD practices. Yet, teacher PD has overshadowed PPD, receiving more time, resources, and attention at both district and state level (Prothero, 2015; Rowland, 2017). Establishing research-based criteria provides guidance for creating effective, high quality PPD and creating accountability measures to ensure this is taking place.

The overall purpose of this study was to examine whether state certification policies match research-determined and expert-validated criteria for PPD policies. It is the belief of the authors that reliable accountability measures are necessary to ensure effective PPD is advancing the professional growth of school administrators.

## Literature Review

Our analysis delineated five major themes within the recent body of research on PPD, which, rather than negating or disproving previous theories, often augmented these, as shown in the foundational knowledge discussed below (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). These five themes are intended to be used in conjunction.

### **Theme 1: Effective PPD is required, individualized, and based on data.**

Literature on PPD suggests principals and districts should collaborate on a mandatory, individualized and data-driven PPD plan: Evans and Mohr (1999) have demonstrated that effective PPD is never fleeting, random, or generalized. As Reed has argued, “the one-size-fits-all approach is no longer relevant” (2014, p. 38), as a lack of individualized attention leads to growth in some principals, little or none in others. Site-based PD provides a more hands-on, problem-based learning approach, but it is not always possible to conduct PPD at a principal’s school.

Whether taking place on site or not, high-quality PPD has been tailored to the principal’s school and instructional circumstances (Evans & Mohr, 1999). Oliver has recommended that the PD of assistant principals is also not left “to chance or sporadic activities” (2005, p. 91), and recommends the continuous evaluation and revision of plans based on the needs of the individual.

A tailored plan does not mean the principal experiences PPD in isolation. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform, for instance, personalized all development while keeping principals in a group setting (Evans & Mohr, 1999). Evans and Mohr suggested that principals first identified their specific needs and then learned from each other in a collaborative setting. Though challenging, this approach was simultaneously a collaborative and individualized exercise.

The creation of an individualized PPD plan depends on a principal’s ability to understand their own leadership strengths and weaknesses. While many are able to do so without much consideration or reflection, often an outside source—a supervisor, mentor, or formal needs assessment—is better placed to determine a principal’s attributes. Gray and Bishop have argued that a needs assessment provides the necessary foundation for PPD containing aspects they term challenge and support: “Challenge means taking people out of their comfort zones by facing them with new experiences and developing new capacities in the process. Support provides the individual with the motivation and belief that they can learn, grow, and change” (2005, p. 29). Effective communication between principals—confronted with ever-expanding responsibilities—and district leaders is also crucial for creating productive PPD plans (Evans and Mohr, 1999).

Effective needs assessments are multifaceted and require direction: reviewing a principal’s leadership philosophy or areas of interest will not sufficiently reveal strength and areas in need of development (Evans & Mohr, 1999). As Evans and Mohr (1999) noted, principals were often found sharing professional stories rather than participating in actual PD conversations. A formal needs assessment provides data in various areas of leadership (i.e. student test scores, teacher satisfaction surveys, responses to mission and vision questionnaires) to give an accurate picture of the principal’s current philosophy, practice, and impact on students and staff (Evans & Mohr, 1999). A PPD plan can then be tailored to fit the needs of the principal. For instance, if the needs assessment indicated instructional leadership as an area of weakness, the district and the principal could prioritize the adoption of best practices and immediate removal of ineffective practices (Evans & Mohr, 1999).

Having identified the principal’s leadership strengths and weaknesses, a PPD plan can be created by the principal with district help and/or approval. According to Reed (2014), effective districts cooperate with principals to establish annual development goals either in the previous summer or early in the school year. If the principal and the district have conflicting ideas of what

PPD is needed, neither will be satisfied. If, however, the principal and the district align their development goals, the principal is more invested in his/her personal growth and the district is more likely to provide the necessary support, resulting in more effective school leadership skills and school improvement (Reed, 2014).

Two studies have made the case for establishing strong foundational knowledge about a principal's skills and needs before implementing PPD, and suggest plans must be data-driven (Ayers et al., 2012; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Togneri and Anderson studied five high-poverty school districts showing school improvement and identified data-based PD as a key factor: "districts provided teachers and principals with better data—and with more assistance in how to use them to guide instructional practice" (2003, p. 93). Once principals had received training in data analysis and received meaningful data sets, their decisions became data-based. This process enabled principals to become district leaders and train teacher-leaders to make data-driven decisions in the teachers' individual classrooms (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Under this model, shared leadership within the district created the opportunity for positive change to take place in instructional leadership. As Togneri and Anderson explain, "improving learning opportunities for all children will require more than individual talents or school-by-school efforts. It will demand system-wide approaches that touch every child in every school in every district across the nation" (2003, p. 88). Creating stronger leaders within the district was one factor in improving learning opportunities for all students. While providing effective PPD created strong leaders across a district, a productive relationship between principal and district leaders led to tailored, meaningful, and effective PPD (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

## **Theme 2: Effective PPD is job-embedded, ongoing, and sustained.**

Professional development for educators and administrators has taken a multitude of forms, and been as random as a mandatory, largely irrelevant, isolated workshop or as site-specific as district walk-throughs with immediate feedback (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). For PPD to be effective, it must be job-embedded, ongoing and sustained (Lawrence, Santiago, Zamora, Bertani, & Bocchino, 2008; National Staff Development Council, 2000; Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Togneri and Anderson reported that districts committed to long-term development successfully improved their performance: "The districts in our study understood that making a difference takes time. They set their courses and stayed with them for years. They experienced remarkable stability in their leadership" (2003, p. 88). These districts were committed to developing their principals before PPD plans were formed or implemented. With full district support and backing, effective PPD created improvement-focused school leaders (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Once district administrators committed to a long-term PPD plan, principals acquired the practical tools required to enhance their daily practices (Lawrence et al., 2008). According to Lawrence et al. (2008), the five most important principles for successful PPD were job-embedment, practicality on a daily basis, a safe environment, ongoing support through coaching, and the provision of a network for consultation and problem-solving. Lawrence et al. argue that "principals need tools, protocols, and strategies to enhance their work as leaders. High-quality leadership development programs blend knowing what to do—declarative knowledge—with knowing how and when to do it—procedural and contextual knowledge" (2008, p. 26). These tools and protocols originate from a variety of sources, including a coach or mentor, district level leaders, and non-district employees with knowledge of best practices. Whether from internal or external sources, effective tools must be practical in nature, and as Peterson has reported, PPD must be "career-staged", therefore new and veteran principals will receive different training (2002, p. 22). Peterson

(2002) also suggests the inclusion of aspiring principals in practical PPD would prepare the foundations for successful school leadership.

Lawrence et al. (2008) identified practical PPD as necessary for effecting change in leaders and improving schools, and argue that job-embedded PPD provides a principal with the most practical knowledge and skills for their own setting:

If principals are to acquire foundational knowledge, apply advanced skills to real-life challenges, and develop a deep understanding of the content, they must practice and apply their skills through concrete, hands-on experiences. This requires an integrated program design that enables participants to practice their program learning and transfer it to their daily leadership actions in schools. (p. 34)

Kelley and Shaw (2009) and Gray and Bishop (2005) agree that contextual leadership development is most effective. Principals become more invested when they see how PPD is directly applied to their setting and potentially addresses an immediate school need. Job-embedded PPD also provides principals with the practical tools necessary to change their daily practices (Lawrence et al., 2008).

Effective PPD provides principals with the practical tools to enhance their instructional leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012; Lawrence et al., 2008; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) has called for excellence in instructional leadership and argues that effective PPD will include new thinking on effective leadership (NSDC, 2000). The NSDC report published in 2000 placed an emphasis on developing principals, who would then take this knowledge and experience to their school sites and develop their teachers. As Hallinger and Murphy (2012) have stated, “while effective leadership cannot guarantee successful education reform, research affirms that sustainable school improvement is seldom found without active, skillful instructional leadership from principals and teachers” (p. 6). According to Peterson (2002), to successfully increase instructional leadership, PPD must be continuous:

While the most common professional development programs for administrators are one-shot workshops, a more successful approach is to have all-day and multiple-session meetings over the entire year. The short sessions can provide information on smaller topics, but a longer experience with a cohort group can have a greater impact on learning and the development of professional networks in the district. A combination of summer program and school year meetings is a successful approach. (p. 16)

As principals need more than sporadic or one-time PPD events, job-embedded, ongoing professional development is a necessity (Peterson, 2002).

### **Theme 3: Effective PPD is a collaborative process providing a safe setting for consultation and problem-solving.**

A number of studies (Evans & Mohr, 1999; Lawrence et al., 2008) have suggested building-level administrators need the opportunity to problem-solve and collaborate with their peers in a safe setting. As Lawrence et al. (2008) reported, “Principals often learn alone, on the job, and in the full view of the public. When learning new skills, principals need multiple practice sessions, rewriting opportunities, and closed rehearsal space just as other performers do” (p. 36). A safe setting enabled administrators to develop confidence in their skills and take risks they may not have taken when carrying out on-the-job duties. Research suggests it is important for principals to experience tools, protocols, and strategies as part of their learning; practice these processes in a safe environment; receive feedback during practice; and exchange strategies (Lawrence et al., 2008). In these safe

spaces, principals gave and received feedback from their peers, an important step whenever new skills, techniques or approaches are learned. Role-playing with other building-level administrators and receiving feedback on the process enabled principals to develop new skills efficiently and effectively (Lawrence et al., 2008).

While a principal's learning is personal, this takes place most effectively while working in groups, with individuals critically considering one another's thinking to reach a higher understanding (Evans & Mohr, 1999). Principals' learning has been shown to be most efficient when others are learning the same concepts, strategies, and techniques in the same context.

Several studies have shown principals holding each other accountable for PPD content and skills. As Evans and Mohr (2009) have explained, relationships emerge from PPD and remain strong through a mutual appreciation for collaborative development:

The relationships that evolve out of small group professional development sustain the work between gatherings. Participants stay in touch through e-mail and telephone—and sometimes airplanes. They become very familiar with one another's contexts and are therefore able to encourage and prod one another in helpful ways. They make commitments to one another and build a web of lateral accountability. (p. 2)

Other principals who understand the unique challenges they face are a vital outlet:

In the midst of this very serious work it is, in part, a sense of humor that gives principals the elasticity and the willingness to face tough choices and difficult times. We have some fun—we eat and laugh together. Sometimes we cry together. (Evans & Mohr, 1999, p. 5)

As Black (2000) has reported, a small group of trusted confidants is hugely beneficial: “Professional development should include a network of critical friends” (p. 17). However, rather than merely an outlet for frustrations, this must be a constructive network: research has shown that districts with successful PPD created “collegial circles of principals that focus on improving teaching and learning rather than commiserate about day-to-day problems and frustrations” (National Institute on Educational Governance, 1999, p. 17). Keeping the focus on developing skills to improve teaching and learning is vital during collaborative PPD (NIEG, 1999).

Data analysis is a primary method for schools to determine their current reality, and this is an area in which collaboration has proved particularly effective. According to Nicholson (2006), effective PPD activities focus on specific school improvement goals; employ mechanisms for analysis regression, stagnation, or progression; increase a principal's ability to analyze data; take place at a principal's own school; and focus on solving real problems. Reviewing data also raises the likelihood of behavioral, academic and staff challenges being resolved (Nicholson, 2006). Building-level administrators who have analyzed data independently and then shared their findings with a group gain different perspectives for analyzing problems, a process that also leads to increased consensus-building (National Staff Development Council, 2000). On returning to their schools, administrators can analyze and become familiar with data independently before meeting with grade level teams or departments: principals who had taken part in collaborative, data-infused PPD experiences are more likely to ask appropriate questions, explain trends, and receive useful feedback from teachers at these meetings (NSDC, 2000).

It is important that these collaborative networks are maintained: on returning to their schools, principals often feel isolated and daunted by the task of implementing their new knowledge (Bezzina, 1994). Creating an effective learning culture enables PPD participants to continue to learn

and seek feedback (Bezzina, 1994). Sparks (2002) has provided examples of how this culture can be sustained:

Principals participate in specialized institutes focused on particular instructional programs or practices, attend support groups and study groups, participate in ‘inter-visitations’ (visits to other schools to promote understanding of a specific practice) and ‘buddying’ (informal meetings to share problems and strategies for their solution). (p. 80)

Building-level administrators who learn together, provide feedback to one another, and visit each other’s schools are more likely to develop a sense of trust, enabling them to be honest, take risks and grow together (Sparks, 2000).

Togneri and Anderson (2003) analyzed several districts and found collaboration in PPD occurred in many forms:

In two of the districts, principals met weekly to share challenges, exchange strategies and learn about emerging issues. In other districts, principals met monthly in full groups and small peer groups. As a result, of the formal gatherings, principals throughout the districts developed numerous informal collegial networks. Principals repeatedly noted that they relied heavily on a small group of colleagues with whom they connected by e-mail and phone weekly, and sometimes daily. (p. 40)

Sparks (2000) has argued that school systems wishing to raise the quality of teaching and learning must ensure all principals are members of ongoing study groups to address the most important instructional issues within their schools. Principals would not be as engaged and less likely to form bonds with one another if the topics discussed during PPD did not directly relate to their positions (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Professional development for principals has lagged behind that for teachers, as Prothero (2015) has reported:

If you go to a conference on education, of the 100 sessions on professional development, 98 might be on teacher PD and maybe one will be on principal PD ... Professional development for school leaders is often bypassed for other pressing needs such as teacher training. The professional development many principals have received was of questionable quality. (p. 10)

Improved PD experiences in general only took place once districts ensured there were funds available to pay for quality PPD (Nicholson, 2005). As Nicholson (2005) has explained, there is often confusion over whether this is the case: “Currently identified characteristics of effective PD are tentative, tending to feature “yes, but” elements (e.g., yes, sufficient time and resources are necessary, but time and resources are scarce)” (p. 6). Accessible research for policy makers has existed for some time. However, districts received insufficient funds or allocated funds in a manner leaving PPD underfunded (Nicholson, 2005). To address resource concerns, districts with financial difficulties have at times combined their resources to meet mutual needs, while smaller, rural districts often come together to focus on issues of local interest (Nicholson, 2006).

#### **Theme 4: Effective PPD is reflective.**

Reflection enables individuals to challenge concepts, beliefs, and philosophies as well as reach a commonality embracing best practices and thought. As Daudelin (1997) has stated, reflection takes a number of forms: informal reflection happens in everyday life; formal reflection often occurs

in the workplace. However, as natural and familiar as this practice is, reflection is often not seen as an effective learning and educational process, and is neglected in favor of a more active, practical approach (Daudelin, 1997). While some organizations resist implementing a reflective approach, a number have begun to embed reflection into their practices (Daudelin, 1997).

At its core, reflection is a personal cognitive process, enabling individuals to connect experiences in order to inform decisions. Daudelin (1997) has defined reflection as:

The process of stepping back from an experience to ponder, carefully and persistently, its meaning to the self through the development of inferences; learning is the creation of meaning from previous or current events that serve as a guide for future behavior. (p. 13)

Daudelin (1997) has also described four stages of reflection: defining the issue to reflect upon; analyzing the problem and searching for possibilities; formulating and testing a theory; and acting on or bringing closure to the reflection. Ross (1989) has also established stages for reflection: identifying a problem; responding to the problem by connecting it to similar situations; framing and reframing the problem; anticipating the consequences and implications of the varying solutions developed; and determining if the consequences were those desired.

Having applied the practice of reflection to the educational context, Evans and Mohr (1999) demonstrated that providing principals with the opportunity to reflect on their work and practice did not conflict with the ability to complete objectives: a common misconception. Although most individuals have viewed PPD as an opportunity to discover new methodologies and strategies (Evans & Mohr, 1999), effective PPD is more than the absorption of ideas and techniques and provides principals with the ability to reflect on their own and other daily practices within their school (Polite, 2000). Polite (2000) has stated that reflective development is not only important for making effective decisions, but also in understanding the purpose and reasoning behind a decision. While a managerial skills process focuses on drawing a conclusion, reflective practice prioritizes questioning a decision and the implications of implementing a decision (Polite, 2000).

Research has shown that providing principals the time and opportunity to reflect is a significant aspect of effective PPD (Gil-Garcia & Cintron, 2002). Wagner (2006) has argued that an effective leader who implements reflective practice will produce four beneficial results: data-driven decision making, providing a more precise view of their own skills and areas of development; individualized, accurate and well-defined PD plans; increased student achievement through the genuine development of areas of strength; and the creation of effective and innovative PD goals through consistent re-evaluation.

A study at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (Evans & Mohr, 1999) prioritized the reflection process for principals. In this study by Evans and Mohr (1999), principals wrote responses to questions posed, then shared and reflected on these within the group, enabling them to analyze their own thought processes, procedures, and position on a specific concept. Not only did principals gain insight into other approaches, they learned the value of reflecting and sharing (Evans & Mohr, 1999). The principals then began to implement reflection as a part of staff development, which led to increased consensus on various school issues (Evans & Mohr, 1999). In this approach to PPD, termed the reflective inquiry approach, principals embrace their current knowledge while developing new knowledge through an inquiry process, resulting in an appreciation that their primary source of knowledge and information lies in reflecting on their practices and engaging with this knowledge (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002). Gray & Bishop (2009) have shown how keeping reflective journals, tracking the experiences that contribute to their development, has helped principals cultivate their leadership skills. In a study analyzing the development needs of assistant principals, Oliver (2005)

found a strong desire for the opportunity to converse and reflect on information presented during PD. The assistant principals believed this essential to ensure the process benefited their development (Oliver, 2005).

### **Theme 5: Effective PPD is supported through on-going coaching and/or mentoring.**

Ehrich and Hansford (2006) have found that instructional accountability has an emotional and physical effect on principals and, as a result, programs to assist principals have tended to focus on managing the demands of the position, many of which are complex and conflicting (Ehrich & Hansford 2006). Mentoring and coaching programs have been shown to help principals develop the skills and attributes to deal with these demands, and have been utilized in PPD for over 25 years (Daresh, 2010). In fact, though once a rarity in our educational system, mentoring has become a certification requirement in approximately half of U.S. states (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). However, the implementation of effective mentoring programs remains problematic (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013).

Though research suggests mentoring is an effective form of PPD, as Della Sala et al. (2013) have detailed, adequate resources and time are vital for success. Principals and mentors have often lacked sufficient time to develop the relationship needed for success (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Gray & Bishop, 2009). Ehrich et al. (2004) noted other obstacles, including mentee nonacceptance of the program (lack of trust and cooperation), inadequate training to implement the mentoring program, jealousy issues, and mentor workload balance. Mentees have also faced gender and race issues, particularly when female mentees have been matched with male mentors and African American mentees with Caucasian mentors (Ehrich et al., 2004).

According to Barnett & O'Mahony (2007), effective mentoring meets several criteria: space is created for the two individuals to reflect on issues within school leadership; social interaction is created and the support received is personalized; the program connects to the central points of leadership work; the focus is on individual development through internal engagement; a principal's learning and PPD is enriched through personalized feedback; and finally, the program takes place in conjunction with other job-embedded development strategies and opportunities. Research by Ehrich, Hansford and Tennent (2004) has determined that successful mentor programs have had explicitly defined goals and desired outcomes, thoughtful and well-designed matching of mentor and mentee, adequate time and resources, and safeguards to minimize possible conflicts (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004).

Research has shown the importance of a state or district developing and structuring their mentor program based on local goals and policies, and district mentoring programs have tended to pair a novice principal with a veteran principal from within the same district. However, this relationship can at times create an uncomfortable forum that does not allow for the effective sharing of ideas, while the demands of principalship may not allow the mentor to adequately invest in the mentee's development (Bloom, Costangna, & Warren, 2003). Bloom, Costangna, and Warren (2003) have suggested that novice principals should be paired with a mentor to provide support, information and assistance on district issues, but should also be allocated an external (non-district) coach. The lack of internal connection to the school district enables external coaches to assist the individual in confidence, keeping information and discussion between the coach and the principal. While the concept of coaching has not been widely accepted for school administrators it has often been implemented in teacher development (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2012). DeHann (2005) and Barnett and O'Mahony (2013) have identified many benefits in coaching, including the ability to tailor the process to person-focused, insight-focused, problem-focused, or solution-focused relationships, while Rich and Jackson (2005) found coaches were able to assist principals in honing

specific skills, thinking reflectively, contextualizing situations in the broader educational landscape, and understanding themselves.

The research covered in this literature review demonstrates not only the need for PPD, but for effective PPD policies. In the following section we will discuss how we refined and utilized the criteria created from this review to assess whether state PPD policies adhere to research-based recommendations.

## Method

### State Selection Process

The focus of this research is each state's policy relating to the creation of PPD, specifically whether such policy mandates adherence to research-based recommendations.

In order to gather information on policy the following steps were taken: (1) the websites of state Departments of Education were identified and analyzed, (2) state policies on state government websites were identified and analyzed and (3) state departments of education were contacted by phone to clarify their policies. The PPD policies and/or recertification policies of all 50 states and the District of Columbia were collected by a three-person research team. Department of Education websites from each state were analyzed, and if PPD requirements were unclear from the websites, the state Department of Education was contacted for clarification.

The research team completed this process through consensus coding using a spreadsheet that listed the state, the source of data, the presence of a PPD policy, and the research team's initial evaluation of the policy. Department of Education interviewees were selected based on their involvement in and knowledge of the certification process. The research team made sure to work through the chain of command to ensure information was correct and consistent with state policy.

The research team then reviewed the policy of each state, listing the source of information and answering the following questions: does the state have a PPD policy for licensure or renewal (if yes, what are the requirements or hours) and does the state provide a model or best practice for PPD as established in the literature? Once these questions were answered, the research team presented an initial review determining that 27 states had policies for mandatory PPD of over an hour and took additional steps to enhance the impact by requiring specific content or delivery models. The remaining 23 states and the District of Columbia established mechanisms for certification but did not present adequate information for this analysis.

### Criteria Development

Having established which states had PPD requirements, the research team began to develop criteria for effective PPD based upon the larger body of literature and expert consultation. The five expert-validated criteria listed in the literature review served as the basis: (1) Effective PPD is required, individualized, and based on data; (2) Effective PPD is job-embedded, ongoing, and sustained; (3) Effective PPD is a collaborative process providing a safe setting for consultation and problem-solving; (4) Effective PPD is reflective; and (5) Effective PPD is supported through on-going coaching and/or mentoring.

Experts in the field who had made notable contributions to school administration PD were then contacted to review the criteria and indicators. The expert panelists who provided feedback are as follows:

- **Bruce Barnett, Ph.D.** Department Chair and Professor at the University of Texas in San Antonio in the area of Educational Leadership.

- **Tricia Browne-Ferrigno, Ph.D.** Professor at the University of Kentucky in the area of Educational Leadership Studies.
- **Leslie Hazel Bussey, Ph.D.** Executive Director of the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI).
- **Terry Orr, Ph.D.** Associate Professor at Fordham University in the area of Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy

These individuals recommended revisions and ultimately validated the criteria and indicators as follows:

- **Criterion 1: PPD is required, individualized, and based on student, teacher, and principal performance data.**
  - Indicator 1: Expectations for PPD are explicitly defined and widely communicated (Corcoran, Casserly, Price-Baugh, Walston, Hall, & Simon, 2013; Honig, 2013; Levin, Datnow & Carrier, 2012).
  - Indicator 2: The principal identifies performance strengths, weaknesses, dispositions, and areas of interest (Bussey & Welch, 2013; Gray & Bishop, 2009).
  - Indicator 3: The principal creates a PPD plan guided by student data and school/district improvement goals/plans (Evans & Mohr, 1999).
  - Indicator 4: Principals partner with district leaders to develop the PPD plan (Honig, 2013; Reed, 2014).
  - Indicator 5: The principal utilizes data to make decisions regarding school improvement to advance student achievement (Ayers et al., 2012; Sutcher et al., 2017; Togneri & Anderson, 2003).
- **Criterion 2: PPD is job-embedded and sustained.**
  - Indicator 1: Through job-embedded PPD, principals acquire practical tools that lead to a change in their daily practices (Lawrence et al., 2008; Oliver, 2005; Peterson, 2002).
  - Indicator 2: PPD is job-embedded and organized around a set of strategies to improve instructional leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013; Lawrence et al., 2008; Sutcher et al., 2017; Togneri & Anderson, 2003).
  - Indicator 3: PPD focuses on training to enable the principal to do their job more effectively while incorporating new thinking on leadership (Sparks & Hirsch, 2000).
  - Indicator 4: Principals sustain PPD throughout the duration of their career (Datnow, Lasky, Stringfield, & Teddie, 2006; Pounder & Crow, 2005).
  - Indicator 5: The PPD plan is malleable as school or district needs arise or change (Leithwood, Lewis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).
- **Criterion 3: PPD is a collaborative process that enables consultation, problem-solving, and learning.**
  - Indicator 1: PPD encourages co-learning among principals (Honig, 2013; Levin et al., 2012; Togneri & Anderson, 2003).
  - Indicator 2: PPD analyzes site-specific data to problem-solve collaboratively (Black, 2000; Evans & Mohr, 1999; Lawrence et al., 2008; Nicholson et al., 2005; Sparks, 2002; Sparks & Hirsch, 2000; Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

- Indicator 3: Principals receive adequate resources for PPD from district leaders to share during co-learning (Evans & Mohr, 1999; Nicholson et al., 2005).
- Indicator 4: PPD takes place in a setting that fosters risk-taking (Black, 2000; Bussey & Welch, 2013; Evans & Mohr, 1999; Lawrence et al., 2008; Sparks, 2000).
- **Criterion 4: PPD is reflective.**
  - Indicator 1: Principals reflect on current PPD needs and experience (Bussey & Welch, 2013; Evans & Mohr, 1999; Gray & Bishop, 2009; Oliver, 2005).
  - Indicator 2: Principals reflect upon and clarify their values, beliefs, and dispositions, understanding that self-knowledge is the bedrock of effective leadership (Bussey & Welch, 2013).
  - Indicator 3: Principals reflect on PPD and apply it to a specific setting or context (Gray & Bishop, 2009; Oliver, 2005).
- **Criterion 5: PPD is supported through on-going coaching and/or mentoring.**
  - Indicator 1: PPD includes a matched mentor or coach (Aladejana, Aladejana & Ehindero, 2006; Grogan & Crow, 2004; Gümüs, 2019; Price & Chen, 2003;).
  - Indicator 2: The principal and mentor establish a regular meeting schedule (Lawrence et al., 2008; Tooms, Barnett, & Shoho, 2010).
  - Indicator 3: Principal-mentor meetings have a clear focus (Gray & Bishop, 2009; Lawrence et al., 2008; Tooms et al, 2010).
  - Indicator 4: Principal-mentor relationships include observations of authentic leadership experiences such as leading faculty meetings or facilitating teacher team meetings (Southern Regional Education Board, 2007).
  - Indicator 5: Principal-mentor meetings lead to the further identification of leadership needs and strengths (Gray & Bishop, 2009; Lawrence et al., 2008; Tooms et al., 2010).

The PPD systems of the 27 selected states were analyzed to determine to what degree they meet this expert-validated criteria. States were given a 'yes' if their publicly accessible policy information had language similar to the indicator. A majority-rules decision-making process was implemented.



Table 2  
*Percentage of States Adhering to Each Indicator*

	<i>PPD is required, individualized, and based on student, teacher, and principal performance data</i>					<i>PPD is job-embedded and sustained</i>					<i>PPD is a collaborative process that enables consultation, problem-solving, and learning</i>				<i>PPD is reflective</i>			<i>PPD is supported through on-going coaching and/or mentoring</i>				
Indicators	1:1	1:2	1:3	1:4	1:5	2:1	2:2	2:3	2:4	2:5	3:1	3:2	3:3	3:4	4:1	4:2	4:3	5:1	5:2	5:3	5:4	5:5
Percentage	100	26	44	37	37	48	30	63	67	63	37	59	19	56	33	19	26	22	7	7	4	4

## Discussion

Our data shows that the policies of many states in October 2015 were not meeting the needs of principals as established by our research-based criteria. The low percentage of adherence to Criterion 1/Indicator 2 (26%) reveals that state policies are not demanding the implementation of individualized PPD plans, which enable school leaders to discover the areas they need to develop professionally and uses their own experiences and data to assist with this growth. Implementing needs assessments, supported and reviewed by district leaders, would enable principals to review various data points that present a picture of their own beliefs, practices, and philosophy and what impact these are having on students and staff members.

The low percentage of adherence to Criteria 3/Indicator 3 (19%) shows that resource allocations for collaboration between principals is severely lacking; very few states mandate these opportunities and/or allocate appropriate resources.

Opportunities for reflection are rarely a requirement of PPD policies, as shown by the low percentage for Criterion 4/Indicator 2 (19%). As discussed in the literature review, without reflecting on their values, beliefs, and dispositions, principals cannot make informed decisions, accurately analyze challenges, and evaluate their successes or failures.

The lowest performing criterion in the study relates to mentoring and coaching. Despite this technique being used in our educational system for many years, it is evident that the implementation and expectation of mentorship for school leadership remains deficient.

Of the 27 states examined, only Oregon met all the criteria indicators. Three states were making great progress towards meeting the criteria, and twenty-three were in the process of developing an effective policy. Overall, however, our findings demonstrate a disconnect between state policies and research-based criteria for PPD. One possible explanation for this might be that states have traditionally handed local control to districts without also providing guidance on how to conduct PPD. Though there have been some attempts to create accountability through the introduction of performance expectations and assessment, there is evidence that schools retain control over the direction and elements of their improvement practices (Wieczorek, 2017). Without a research-based policy for PPD, states are not ensuring principals receive the appropriate development to address the academic and socio-emotional needs of students, or to assist their staff members in dealing with the state, district and school educational goals and expectations. A lack of funding may also be an impediment to creating a state-wide PPD policy and accountability measures. Though a district-based practice allows for tailoring to local needs, it neither guarantees this happens in all districts, nor ensures the PPD opportunities provided adhere to research-based

criteria. Our data illustrates a need for states to revisit their PPD policies and leads us to make the recommendations for further study detailed below.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Although our study reviewed public policy regarding PPD, it did not analyze local policies or programs geared towards the continuous development of principals. Further research could determine whether the PPD programs produced by many school districts and local entities adequately meet the criteria established above.

Another limitation is that this study does not examine why states have not researched and/or implemented research-based practices for PPD. With only 53% of states having an accessible PPD policy, it is important to discover why the other 47% do not. There could be a variety of reasons why these states/territories do not have such a system, but this could also be due to our data collection being limited to publicly accessible information and initiatives. Although this study generated viable criteria for PPD policy analysis, it did not address the extent to which a state actually implemented their PPD policy. This would require in-depth analysis of each state.

Finally, although it is customary to use research-based criteria validated by experts it is possible that some states and districts believe there are other criteria more pertinent to the professional growth of their school administration. A comparative analysis of official ideologies regarding principal development and the research-based criteria above could lead to further discussion on the disconnect between the divergent frames of thought.

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## About the Authors

### **Keith Davis**

Saint Louis University

[davis.keith54@gmail.com](mailto:davis.keith54@gmail.com)

Dr. Davis is currently the principal of Blalack Middle School in Carrollton Farmers Branch Independent School District. His research interests include culturally-relevant pedagogy, restorative practices, effective educational strategies for urban education, critical thinking, and closing the achievement gap.

### **Deborah Rogers**

Saint Louis University

[deborahannrogers@gmail.com](mailto:deborahannrogers@gmail.com)

Dr. Deborah Rogers is currently the principal of Patrick Henry Downtown Academy in St. Louis Public Schools in St. Louis, Missouri. Dr. Rogers believes in the possibility of all children, and engages stakeholders to provide the opportunity for personal and academic growth for every student.

### **Martin Harrigan**

Saint Louis University

[mmharrigan44@gmail.com](mailto:mmharrigan44@gmail.com)

Dr. Martin Michael Harrigan is currently the Dean of Academics and Innovation at Leland and Gray Middle High School in southwest Vermont. His teacher certifications include K-12 ESL, 5-9 Mathematics, 6-12 English Language Arts, 6-12 Social Studies and K-12 Counseling.

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Volume 28 Number 24

February 10, 2020

ISSN 1068-2341



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